

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03  
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-----058053 101641Z /73

O R 101440Z MAR 78  
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 3264

E.O.11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IS  
SUBJ: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT CABINET DISUNITY

REF: TEL AVIV 3117

SUMMARY: THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT IS NOW AT ITS LOWEST STANDING  
FOLLOWING WEIZMAN'S RESIGNATION THREAT. THE CABINET  
IS DIVIDED ON BOTH IDEOLOGICAL AND PERSONAL LINES. THE  
BASIC CONFLICT PERTAINS TO THE SANCTITY OF THE LIKUD ELECTION  
PLATFORM. THE PRIME MINISTER WILL ATTEMPT TO INSTILL NEW  
DISCIPLINE AND UNITY ON HIS GOVERNMENT ON HIS RETURN FROM  
WASHINGTON, BUT IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT A CABINET  
SHAKE-UP MAY BE UNAVOIDABLE. THE WASHINGTON VISIT WILL  
AFFECT BOTH THE TIMING AND EXTENT OF ANY SUCH CHANGES.  
END SUMMARY  
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1. "THE WEIZMAN INCIDENT" HAS BROUGHT THE LIKUD GOVERN-  
MENT TO ITS LOWEST POINT SINCE ITS FORMATION NINE  
MONTHS AGO. HOWEVER, THE DEFENSE MINISTER'S RESIGNATION  
THREAT CANNOT BE CONSIDERED IN ISOLATION, AS A SIMPLE  
POWER PLAY ON THE PART OF AN AMBITIOUS CANDIDATE IN THE  
SUCCESSION SWEEPSTAKES. RATHER IT REPRESENTS THE

CULMINATION OF A FRACTURING OF GOVERNMENT UNITY WHICH HAS BEEN TAKING PLACE SINCE, AND PERHAPS UNDER THE PRESSURE OF, THE SADAT PEACE INITIATIVE. NOR CAN WEIZMAN'S THREAT BE SEEN AS THE ONLY REASON FOR THE LOW ESTEEM IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT IS PRESENTLY HELD. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN AT A LOW POINT ANYWAY FOR ITS POOR RECORD ON DOMESTIC ISSUES, FOR THE STAGNATION OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT, AND FOR THE DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

2. THE ROOTS OF THIS SPLINTERING OF A GOVERNMENT SO RECENTLY HIGHLY TOUTED FOR ITS UNITY AND DISCIPLINE ARE BOTH IDEOLOGICAL AND PERSONAL. WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT (AND RATHER ARTIFICIAL) TO UNTWINE THESE TWO THREADS, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE PERSONAL ANIMOSITIES AMONG THE SENIOR MINISTERS (PARTICULARLY BETWEEN SHARON AND WEIZMAN) ARE REINFORCED BY (AND AT THE SAME TIME REINFORCE) A BASIC IDEOLOGICAL DIVISION. THIS DEEPER CONFLICT REVOLVES AROUND THE PROVISIONS OF THE LIKUD (HERUT) ELECTION PLATFORM REGARDING SETTLEMENT AND BORDERS. THERE ARE THOSE SUCH AS BEGIN AND SHARON WHO ARE COMMITTED TO SALVAGING AT LEAST THE PRINCIPLES OF JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN, AND THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF, THE LAND OF ISRAEL. OTHERS (WEIZMAN AND LIBERALS) ARE LESS FETTERED BY IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS. AS THE EXIGENCIES OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS HAVE REQUIRED PRAGMATISM AND COMPROMISE, THIS BASIC DIVISION HAS BEEN EXPOSED. THIS HELPS EXPLAIN THE INTENSITY OF FEELING SURROUNDING THE MOVEMENT OF ONE TRACTOR IN NEBI ZALAH, WHICH PUT IN BLINDINGLY SHARP FOCUS THIS

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PERSONAL-IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT.

3. THE DEPARTURE OF THE BEGIN PARTY FOR NEXT WEEKS' TALKS IN WASHINGTON POSTPONES ANY ATTEMPTS TO RESTORE ON A PERMANENT BASIS GOVERNMENT UNITY. HOWEVER, BEGIN HIMSELF HAS DECLARED THAT THIS ISSUE WILL BE FACED ON HIS RETURN. IN CONVERSATION THIS MORNING WITH CHARGE, CABINET SECRETARY DARKLY HINTED THAT SOME CHANGES ARE IN THE WIND. THERE ARE THOSE WHO MAINTAIN THAT THIS IS A PASSING EPISODE AND THAT BEGIN CAN SIMPLY PUT WEIZMAN IN HIS PLACE NOW THAT WEIZMAN HAS OVERPLAYED HIS HAND. A VARIATION OF THIS VIEW IS THE ARGUMENT THAT BEGIN WAS CONTENT TO LET THE FEUDING RUN ITS COURSE SO THAT HE COULD STEP IN AS THE WISE ARBITRATOR AND SETTLE THE QUARREL. THIS IS NOT OUR VIEW. THE SPLIT IN THE CABINET IS A DEEP ONE AND CANNOT BE PATCHED OVER. BEGIN HAS NOT EXERTED HIS OLD AUTHORITY SINCE THE KATZ-LANDAU STRUGGLE WITHIN HERUT IN EARLY JANUARY. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT HE CAN SUDDENLY RECOVER TO THE EXTENT THAT HE CAN NOW EXERT TOTAL DISCIPLINE ON HIS MINISTERS (AND HE PROBABLY REALIZES THIS). THEREFORE, A CONFRONTATION LEADING TO ONE OR MORE RESIGNATIONS HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY PROBABLE.

4. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON THE CARTER-BEGIN MEETINGS. A SHARP AND PUBLIC CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE ISRAELI AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENTS WOULD GO A LONG WAY IN MINIMIZING AND POSTPONING ANY SUCH CABINET REALIGNMENTS. WEIZMAN MIGHT BE PUT IN A POSITION WHERE HE WOULD BE PUBLICLY REQUIRED TO SUPPORT UNRESERVEDLY THE ISRAELI STAND IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN A UNITED FRONT AGAINST AN AMERICAN POSITION WHICH IS CLEARLY UNACCEPTABLE; THE CABINET UNITY WOULD BE TEMPORARILY RESTORED AS A RESULT OF THE EXTERNAL THREAT (A CONFRONTATION WITH THE U.S.). (IT SHOULD BE RECALLED THAT WEIZMAN REMAINS IN MANY RESPECTS A HAWK; HIS MODERATION IS ONLY IN RELATIVE TERMS.) ON THE OTHER HAND, A SUCCESSFUL VISIT (OR ONE PERCEIVED

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AS SUCH) WOULD PERMIT BEGIN TO MOVE AHEAD WITH CONFRONTING THIS PROBLEM. PERCEPTIONS OF WEIZMAN'S ROLE IN BRINGING ABOUT THAT SUCCESS- OR THE LACK OF IT--BULD AFFECT BEGIN'S ACTIONS.

5. IN SUM, THE CABINET DISUNITY, MOST VIVIDLY EXPRESSED IN THE WEIZMAN RESIGNATION THREAT, WILL CONTINUE TO BE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE NEGOTIATIONS EQUATION AND WILL BE RESOLVED IN A WAY THAT IS UNFORESEEABLE AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, IT IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE CLEAR THAT ITS RESOLUTION MAY INVOLVE A CABINET SHAKE-UP WHICH MIGHT ITSELF AFFECT THE ISRAELI NEGOTIATING POSTURE. THE TIMING OF THOSE CHANGES WILL BE INFLUENCED BY THE UPCOMING EVENTS IN WASHINGTON.

VIETS

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## Message Attributes

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